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Summary record of the 8th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 19 February 2016, at 10 a.m.

President: Mr. Oh Joon ..... (Republic of Korea)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters (*continued*) (E/2016/L.4/Rev.1, E/2016/L.7 and E/2016/L.8)

Draft decision E/2016/L.4/Rev.1: Theme of the integration segment of the 2016 session of the Economic and Social Council

1. **The President** said that the draft decision had no programme budget implications.

2. *Draft decision E/2016/L.4/Rev.1 was adopted.*

Draft decision E/2016/L.7: Dates of the humanitarian affairs segment of the 2016 session of the Economic and Social Council

3. **The President** said that the draft decision had no programme budget implications.

4. *Draft decision E/2016/L.7 was adopted.*

Draft decision E/2016/L.8: Dates of the multi-stakeholder forum on science, technology and innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals

5. **The President** said that the draft decision had no programme budget implications.

6. *Draft decision E/2016/L.8 was adopted.*

7. **The President** urged delegations to engage in consultations in a spirit of cooperation and compromise in order to come to an agreement on draft resolution E/2016/L.5 on revised working arrangements for the 2016 session of the Economic and Social Council and draft decision E/2016/L.6 on venues and dates of the twelfth and thirteenth sessions of the Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters as soon as possible. Preparations for several important events could not proceed until the dates and themes were formally adopted. In particular, it would be very difficult to properly organize the inaugural meeting of the forum on financing for development follow-up if preparations did not begin immediately. The Bureau of the Council would continue to facilitate informal consultations and make compromise proposals, if necessary.

8. **Mr. Plasai** (Observer for Thailand), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that international cooperation in tax matters was one of the most significant elements of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (A/RES/69/313) and that paragraph 29 of that document should be implemented to the letter. The Group therefore supported the proposal to hold the twelfth session of the Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters back to back with the Council's special meeting on international cooperation in tax matters at United Nations Headquarters in New York. In addition to ensuring the increased engagement of the Committee of Experts with the Council in line with paragraph 29 of the Addis Agenda, that proposal was the most cost-effective: if the Committee continued to meet in Geneva, its secretariat would have to travel there twice and the Committee would have to travel to New York for an additional meeting in order to engage with the Council.

9. The Group of 77 and China supported the proposed duration and theme of the forum on financing for development follow-up but was concerned that its overlap with other important meetings would have a negative impact on participation. Taking into consideration the dates of the high-level thematic debate of the General Assembly, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change Signing Event and the special session of the General Assembly on the world drug problem, the forum could be held on Thursday 14 April to Friday 15 April and continued on Monday 18 April to Wednesday 20 April. A five-day inaugural meeting would reflect the Council's strong commitment to in-depth discussion of financing for development and means of implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. He asked the President to draw up a concept note and programme for the forum for consideration by the Council.

10. It was extremely important for infrastructure for sustainable development to be the theme of the Council's 2016 thematic discussion, given that infrastructure was a cross-cutting means of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. Furthermore, the proposed theme was in line with paragraphs 6 and 19 of the annex to General Assembly resolution 68/1 on the need for the Council to have a strengthened issues-based approach and to devote time to the specific needs of countries in special situations.

11. While it supported the proposal that the theme of the 2016 high-level political forum on sustainable development should be "Ensuring that no one is left behind", the Group of 77 and China wished to

underscore the universal character of the high-level political forum and of the forum on financing for development follow-up, and to note that the decision on the themes for 2016 did not set a precedent for future meetings of those forums.

12. **Mr. Singer** (United States of America) said that the Council should not revive discussions on matters on which there had been no agreement in Addis Ababa, including with regard to the Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters, but rather focus on implementing the agreements that had been reached.

13. His delegation was of the view that the forum on financing for development follow-up should be held from 18 to 20 April, when there were no competing events, as overlap with other important events could result in an empty room. A three-day event would suffice, as the substance of the work mattered more than the duration of the forum.

14. While his delegation had no objection to the consideration of the issue of infrastructure, infrastructure should not be the theme of the high-level political forum, since it was already a key topic of discussion of the forum on financing for development follow-up. Selecting a theme that was being addressed elsewhere could lead to further fragmentation and undermine progress towards the increased coordination among all segments of the Council that was needed to support the follow-up and review framework of the 2030 Agenda.

15. **Ms. Miyano** (Japan) said that 2016 was an important year for meetings, given the recent adoption of documents such as the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda; the necessary preparations and focus on the substance of those events must therefore begin. It would not be useful to resume the long and difficult negotiations on the working methods of the Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters.

16. In the interest of ensuring coherence and integration across meetings and forums, the forum on financing for development follow-up should not take place at the same time as other major meetings. The high-level thematic debate of the General Assembly, the signing of the Paris Agreement and the special high-level meeting of the Council with the Bretton Woods institutions, the World Trade Organization and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development were all pursuing the objective of achieving sustainable development and should not compete with one another.

17. **Ms. Klausa** (Observer for the European Union) said that the European Union would continue its efforts to achieve a compromise solution so that decisions concerning the forum on financing for development follow-up, the Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters and the theme of the high-level political forum could be adopted as soon as possible.

18. Rather than haggling over the duration of the forum, delegations should focus on identifying the topics for discussion. The European Union member States were in favour of a three-day forum, which would be of sufficient duration to complete the necessary work and would not clash with other high-level meetings. She suggested that the Council should examine the programme of work to ensure the best possible use of time.

19. Paragraph 29 of the Addis Ababa Action Agenda was very clear on how cooperation between the Council and the Committee of Experts on International Cooperation in Tax Matters should be strengthened. She therefore urged delegations to refrain from attempting to reinterpret the agreement that had been reached with such difficulty.

20. Given that a forum on the important subject of infrastructure would take place a mere two months prior to the high-level segment of the Council, an alternative theme should be selected for the thematic discussion, in the interest of coherence and efficiency.

21. **Mr. Plasai** (Observer for Thailand), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the Group was ready to work with delegations to reach mutually agreeable decisions on the working arrangements of the Council's 2016 session. He called on all sides to exercise the utmost flexibility, in a spirit of cooperation. The Group of 77 and China was confident that the Council would be able to maintain its tradition of inclusiveness and consensus-building.

22. **Mr. Khane** (Secretary of the Council) said that the annotated agenda had not been released owing to pending Council decisions. However, since the session would begin the following week, the annotated agenda would be released soon. Any further decisions would be issued in the form of addenda.

23. **The President** said that he would soon appoint co-facilitators for the forum on financing for development follow-up, but they would not be able to begin their work of facilitating informal consultations on intergovernmentally agreed conclusions and recommendations until the organizational matters had been settled. He therefore urged delegations to reach an agreement on the dates as soon as possible, in keeping with the Council's tradition of consensus-based decision-making. Unless an agreement was reached very soon, it would become necessary to set an unwelcome precedent by resorting to the rules of procedure.

The meeting rose at 10.40 a.m.